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ABSTRACT

Many organizations assign responsibility for planning, administering, and coordinating programs of training for their employees or members to a specialist whose title is usually director of education or training. Not much is known, however, about the process by which that role emerges. By studying the way training evolves in organizations where training directors have been appointed, an evolutionary process which relates to training in organizations generally may be found and brought into focus. The investigation is an attempt at identification of the phases through which training in organizations proceeds as it becomes increasingly formalized. Training is defined as adult socialization offering adaptive and control opportunities to the sponsoring organization. A six stage developmental model was hypothesized. Utilizing the Blau/Scott organization typology for purposes of differentiation, an industrial firm, a labor union, a hospital, and a police department were selected for study and the developmental path of training in each was analyzed and compared. The hypothesized model was reexamined in the light of the data collected. A revised model is proposed and its utility discussed. The relationship between the evolution of training and that of other control functions in organizations is also examined. (Author)

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A Model of the Developmental Path of Training in Organizations*

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Background and Definitions

A major concern of some of the research and much of the theory in the field of adult education has been that of finding or demonstrating linkages between seemingly widely disparate parts of that field.[1]

One approach to this problem has involved the categorization of institutions within the field. Schroeder has summarized several such efforts into a four part typology of adult education institutions and agencies, wherein the criterion of differentiation was the relationship that the adult education offered had to the main purpose of the sponsoring organization. The categories include those organizations where adult education is:

1) a central function - agencies established to serve the educational needs of adults, such as proprietary schools;

2) a secondary function - agencies established to serve the educational needs of youth which have assumed the added responsibility of serving, at least partially, the educational needs of adults, such as university extension divisions;

3) an allied function - agencies which employ adult education to fulfill only some of the needs which the agencies recognize as their responsibility, such as museums; and

4) a subordinate function - agencies in which adult education is used primarily to enhance the effectiveness of the organization in fulfilling its primary purpose, such as business firms.[2]

Closely related to the typological approach have been the empirical attempts to determine patterns of growth for either similar organizations in the same adult education institutional category[3] or of dissimilar adult education organizations spanning all four of the categories.[4] The design of this study combined elements from each of these strategies in that the patterns of development of adult education in dissimilar organizations in the same category, specifically agencies where adult education is a subordinate function, were to be investigated in the expectation that a pattern in common would be found. It should be noted that much or possibly even most adult education participation in the United States takes place in organizations grouped within this category.[5]

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When adult education is carried out as a subordinate function in organizations, it more often is referred to as training. The definition of such training and the categories of training which were established for this study may vary from common usage but were crucial to the theoretical development upon which the study was designed. Training, which is understood as part of adult socialization,[6] is defined as that process undergone by an individual, usually through contact with an agent, which develops, improves, or adapts the individual's skills, knowledge and attitudes for appropriate performance of a current or future role in an organization. From the point of view of the individual, such training may assist him in fulfilling one or more of those motivations generally believed to support participation in all adult education.[7] From the point of view of the organization, the expected benefits of training would be member compliance to organizational goals and standards as they emerge and enhanced member productivity and value to the organization.

In an organization, training may range from informal to formal, depending both upon the degree of planning or intent accompanying its delivery and the absence or presence of an officially designated agent responsible for its provision. Moreover, training may be differentiated into five broad categories or types. They include pre-service, orientation, induction, inservice, and continuing education.

Pre-service training is the process by means of which a person acquires the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required for recruitment to general membership in an organization or to specific organizational roles. Such training may be obtained through membership or training in other organizations which may or may not have the same purposes or technology as the ones in which the individual desires membership. The training contains elements within it which have some degree of generalizability to a variety of roles. Pre-service training is not ordinarily offered by organizations where adult education is a subordinate function.

Orientation training is the process by which a newcomer to an organization becomes acquainted with the organization, its major goals, and some of its rules and regulations.

Induction training in an organization is the process by which a newcomer to a position in that organization learns the responsibilities of the position, the rules governing its performance, and the relationship between his position and that of others in the organization. This type of training is not limited to recruits but, to one degree or another, is undergone by veteran members of an organization every time they are promoted or change jobs within the organization.

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Inservice training in an organization is the process undergone by a veteran member through which the skills, knowledge, or attitudes appropriate to his current role in the organization are maintained, improved, or changed.

Continuing education is a process of learning experienced by a member of an organization the objectives of which may or may not be related to the role he plays in the organization but which is subsidized in whole or in part by the organization. It is directed primarily by the individual himself, by an agent not regularly employed in the member's organization, or by an outside institution. While the skills, knowledge, and attitudes derived from orientation, induction, and inservice tend to be organizationally specific, those derived from continuing education have more general application.

Rationale of the Study

Within any organization there exists a role system wherein individuals who are members of an organization play out parts which are defined by the interplay of the individuals' personality characteristics and prior training, the officially established coordinating system (the formal organization), the interpersonal friendship system (the informal organization), and the technical and physical system (the instruments or means of production of goods or services).[8] The interplay is not without conflict, however, because each of the elements exert demands on the organization that may be contradictory. The leaders of the formal organization would be expected to be particularly sensitive to this contest because of their responsibility to establish some degree of balance between expected and actual organizational output or, at the least, to keep the system alive. Thus, the administrators of an organization may introduce, by addition or substitution, devices which promote achievement of the goals they perceive as important. Such devices may be called controls.

There are perhaps two broad categories of controls affecting behavior in complex organizations: personal (direct, overt behavior modification efforts) and impersonal (indirect, clerical and mechanical input or output monitors).[9] Increased numbers of supervisors or of supervisory layers would be typical of the former, while budgets, files, assembly lines, or mechanical counters would be characteristic of the latter. Controls also may be either informal or formal. Informal controls influence individual behavior as a result of the effects of non-hierarchically oriented interpersonal relationships within or between groups and of tradition within the organization. Formal controls do so by means of explicitly articulated rules or mechanisms instituted by the organization's directors or administrators at strategic points in the organization's operations or structure; these serve to standardize, monitor, constrain, and influence the performance of members. When informal controls appear inadequate or inappropriate relative to the circumstances and development of the organization, the imposition of formal controls may become increasingly attractive to the leadership of the organization.

Training is part of the control system of the organization. It may be classified as a personal control and, as defined, may range from informal to formal. Etzioni, in fact, has argued that organizational control is largely a function of the selection and socialization of individuals who enter the membership of an organization.[10] The more effective the selection process, the less need there is for organizational socialization; the less need there is for such socialization, the less need there is for an allocation of organizational resources in the form of supervisory or other official effort, ie. training, to facilitate the process.

However, such expenditures on the process occur in the organization whether or not they are explicitly recognized, largely because, organizations are not static, and role systems may be required to adapt to changes internal or external to the organization.

The transformation of training from informal to formal status may be seen as part of the process of elaboration of controls in the organization. In its function of facilitating role acquisition and change, training is an on-going synthesizing process which mediates or captures in some meaningful way some of the influences which determine the role system. Thus, when dysfunctional elements arise within the departments or throughout the organization, there may be efforts by individuals within the formal organization to directly and overtly influence the training process. The idea of instituting some type of formal training to compensate for what would be thought of as inadequately performing, hence poorly trained, members, might emerge as a solution to the problem. The leaders of the formal organization may perceive that with greater control over the planning and delivery of training, they may be able to counteract or reduce the dissonance between their goals and those of individuals and the informal organization. Indeed, it would be expected that as training becomes more formal and more organizationally controlled, the skills, knowledge, and attitudes which come to form the content or objectives of the training offered by the organization tend to reflect even more strongly those elements thought to be supportive to the formal structure of the organization and its technical system.

The expansion and complexity of an organization's control system might be expected to be a function of or related to the size of an organization, and there is evidence that such is the case.[11] In accord with that expectation, one finds that the larger the organization, the more likely it is that it will offer formalized training for its members.[12] This would suggest that the process of an organization's growing in size may be an important contributing factor to a perceived obsolescence of some of its informal controls and the substitution or addition of formal controls by its managers.[13] Therefore, if the assumption is accepted that organizations go through an identifiable series of stages in their growth, each of which involve or require changes in the organization, then the possibility that functions or elements within the organization may also evolve in some sort of sequence may be a logical deduction.

Hypothesis and Design

The hypothesis that was established for this study was that a pattern of discrete, sequential phases in the development of the training function exists and may be identified in organizations where such training is subordinate to the central purposes of the organizations. To guide the investigation a six phase framework was created based upon the organizational control theories of Etzioni and Blau, of adult education, and the experience of the investigator. These hypothetical phases included within them expected changes in the predominant training agent, that is, basically from a line (operations) to a staff (services) department, in the degree of formalization of training in terms of planning, policy, and budget, and in the degree of differentiation of types of training.

The method selected to test the hypothesis was that of the comparative case study. Four seemingly dissimilar organizations, an industrial firm, a hospital, a labor union, and a police department, were chosen as examples of each of the four categories of the Blau and Scott typology of organizations which differentiates organizations on the basis of the assumed primary beneficiary of their output. The categories are business concerns, service organizations, mutual benefit associations, and commonweal (governmental) agencies.[14] The organizations selected each had an officially designated training director, were relatively small in terms of numbers of members, except for the union, and were located in Cook County, Illinois. For purposes of reducing complexity somewhat, none of the organizations selected was thought to have reached the final hypothesized phase.

Interviews, many of which were taped were held with 42 persons located in strategic positions at various levels in the organizations or who had particular seniority. The interviews consisted largely of a common core of open ended questions. Documents, records and other printed matter of great variety and number also were examined. The data thus collected were analyzed, first, to generate a history of each organization in terms of its growth, its leadership pattern, and its traditions. Then, the material related to training was analyzed for each organization, and the chronological development of training was mapped out with special attention to obvious themes or segmentation and to identification of those individuals with official responsibility for various training efforts. Preceding the data collection and continuing through the analysis process, reviews of the general history of institutional development and of training in each of the types of organizations under study, that is, hospitals, police departments, industry, and labor unions, were prepared based largely upon published secondary sources. The data thus collected and reviewed were then subjected to comparison with the original hypothesized phases both to test the descriptive power of the framework and to attempt its reformulation as a result of the new information.

Findings

The data from the case studies, though still undergoing analysis, so far would seem to support the notion that training does indeed tend to evolve in some sequential way within organizations. The original framework, however, proved inadequate in its segregation of that data. Whereas six phases were first thought sufficient, it now would appear that at lease eight such phases are necessary if a relatively comprehensive and complete picture of this evolutionary process is to be achieved. The most surprising finding, however, is that major elements of each phase apparently persist into each successive phase. While in the original formulation of the framework it had been thought that examples of training characteristic of earlier phases might be found, the degree of persistance had not been anticipated. Moreover, there was evidence that the differentiating criterion and the classifications from the Schroeder adult education institution typology could be adapted to describe the relationship formalized training had to the department where the person responsible for its delivery was permanently assigned. These findings, therefore, were incorporated into a revised model. (See chart 1)

The Revised Model

Phase I. The role of the founder of an organization at its creation and early life is influenced by his own personal inclinations, the technology he has chosen as the basis of his organization's activity, and to a great extent, individuals in the external environment with whom goods or services are exchanged. Thus, the primary training agents in this phase are the individual himself directing or selecting his own learning experiences and the external agents. Continuing education may be present wherein the founder utilizes some of the resources of the organization to finance his participation in formal educational programs offered by outside agencies. In later phases, the chief executive officer of the organization likely will continue to search out experiences and people outside the organization which will assist him in better understanding methods and ideas which he can introduce into his organization. Also, a person at any level in the organization who undertakes personally to direct his learning toward the improvement of his role skills might be found in this category in successive phases, as well as might individuals who belong to the organization but are so physically or geographically isolated from that organization that close supervision is not possible or feasible. With the exception of continuing education, which is defined rather precisely, training in the organization is undifferentiated.

Phase II. The main agent of training in this phase is not one individual but rather the group of associates who cluster around the founder and who work out the content, span, and functions of their roles among themselves. Later in the growth of the organization,

Chart 1

A Model of the Development of Training Within Organizations
(Revised)

PHASES*

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
COMPONENTS	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
		II	II	II	II	II	II	II
			III	III	III	III	III	III
				IV	IV	IV	IV	IV
					V	V	V	V
						VI	VI	VI
							VII	VII
								VIII

*The phases may be identified by the primary training agent(s):

Phase I -Self and External Persons

Phase II -Associates

Phase III -Supervisor

Phase IV -Supervisory Assistant with part time responsibilities for training department where training is a subordinate function.

Phase V -Person with part-time training responsibilities located in a staff department where training is an allied function and/or a person with full-time training responsibilities located in a line department where training is a subordinate function.

Phase VI -Person with full-time training responsibilities located in a staff department where training is a secondary function.

Phase VII -Separate staff department where training is a central function.

Phase VIII -Semi-autonomous institution where training is a central function.

the work group at all levels will persist as an agent of role orientation for its members. Training, of course, is informal and undifferentiated in this phase, but, whereas in the first phase there was an emphasis on external agents, in the second phase, individuals and developments internal to the organization increasingly influence role development. Continuing education for some among the associates may be subsidized in whole or in part by the organization.

Phase III. The main training agent in Phase III is the supervisor. The organization and its tasks will have grown to the point that some differentiation of function within the organization becomes necessary and feasible. Supervisors, therefore, come to be appointed and, though they would have the formal responsibility for assisting recruits to adapt to the organization and its standards, their training efforts would not be systematic, at least initially. Over time, however, such efforts might begin to form a more regularized pattern, though the training that does occur is not well differentiated. Continuing education may be sponsored or subsidized by the organization for members who are primarily at the higher management or technical levels, though no official written policy is likely to have been formulated. Consequences of departmentalization and increased membership are a deepening preoccupation with internal organizational,and particularly departmental, concerns and a gathering of strength within the informal organization. Both developments may pose problems to the organization as a whole.

Phase IV. The main training agent in this phase is the assistant supervisor or assistant to the supervisor to whom has been delegated the part-time responsibility of orienting and inducting recruits into his department and of providing inservice training to its veteran members. Training in this department would perform a subordinate function in that it helps equip departmental members to attain departmental goals. The presence of an officially designated agent with increasingly clearly delineated responsibilities for training is indicative of increasing formality of the training function. Moreover, differentiation of training will occur with orientation and induction training becoming more obviously planned activities. Continuing education would continue to be administered informally at the higher levels of the organization.

Phase V. In this phase there may occur a bifurcation of official responsibilities for training in the organization. At the level of the line, a member of a department or unit may be assigned full-time responsibilities for the training of other members of the department and such training would fulfill a subordinate function in the department. The trainer will report directly to the supervisor of the department. At the staff level, a member of a staff department, often its head, may be assigned or may assume part-time training responsibilities including orientation of new members of

the organization and coordination of the continuing education program. Because the staff department has system wide responsibilities, training, thus, becomes an allied function of the department. Where such bifurcation occurs, orientation will be conducted by the staff department representative, and induction and inservice training by the line department representative. The continuing education program will have become an identifiable policy of the organization and its coverage expanded to include more members of the organization.

Phase VI. In this phase, there emerges a person who has full-time responsibilities for training others in the organization and is a member of a staff department where training is a secondary function, implying an upgrading of its importance in the department. This trainer would report directly to the supervisor of that department and may have a number of assistants who act as instructors and report to him. The trainer and his assistants may have responsibility for orientation training of recruits, for planning, coordinating, or providing induction and inservice training for some members of the organization and for administrating the continuing education program. During this phase there may be additional broadening and further clarification of the organization's policy toward continuing education with more members and more types of learning experiences subject to reimbursement. If a full-time trainer had emerged earlier in a line department, some thought might be given, and possibly some action taken, to transfer that person to the staff department.

Phase VII. This phase is marked by the establishment of a separate staff department in which the training of other members of the organization is the central function. The responsibilities of the department, however, may not change drastically from what they were in the staff department during the sixth phase, although there may be a notable increase in the amount of inservice training offered to members of the organization through this department. If the position of full-time trainer in a line department had emerged earlier, action to transfer that person to the new staff department is increasingly likely to occur. The continuing education policy of the organization may continue to be broadened.

Phase VIII. This phase may be identified by the emergence of a semi-autonomous educational institution associated with the parent organization. This institution would serve members of the parent organization but might also take on the responsibility for providing training and educational services for individuals or organizations not associated with the parent organization. In short, this new entity, where training is a central function, may also be classified as being among those organizations where adult education is a central function. The institution may offer, therefore, a full range of training including pre-service, orientation, induction, inservice, and continuing education, depending upon the audience.

Conclusions:

This study has been among the first to attempt a detailed comparative analysis of the way in which adult education develops in organizations where it is a subordinate function. Its results would indicate that in at least some organizations in that category, each of which seemed very different from the other, adult education, or training as it has been called here, appears to have evolved in very similar ways. If this is true for some, perhaps it is true for all such organizations; if it is true for them all, then industrial training directors, labor union educators, nursing inservice administrators, and police academy directors have much more in common than they may have thought. A segment of the field of adult education, then, may have been brought somewhat closer, at least theoretically.

The apparent adaptability of a typology categorizing adult education institutions to one classifying parts of organizations offering training may be illustrative of how much parellelism there is in the field. The possibility, also, that the end product of the evolution of training in these organizations may be, in some instances, a free standing institution devoted primarily to adult education would seem to suggest that the model used in this study to explain the development of adult education in one segment of the field may have potential for describing how it develops in parts of another segment.

From the practicioner's point of view, a model of the type suggested in this study can have considerable utility. At the least, it offers a guide, one starting point, that trainers can use in trying to understand their role in an organization and how it came to be. That organizations may have rich histories of training before a training director ever becomes appointed and that some in the organization may have vested interests in those older patterns are possibilities that the new training director may wish to consider as he enters his organization. Nonetheless, that a complex training system may exist outside his control need not be threatening to a training director. If he seeks out the collaborative possibilities inherent in that system, he may strengthen it with benefits accruing both to the organization and to its members.

FOOTNOTES

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[5]John W. C. Johnstone and Ramon J. Rivera, Volunteers for Learning: A Study of the Educational Pursuits of American Adults (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965), p. 61.

[6]Orville G. Brim, Jr., "Adult Socialization," in John A. Clausen, editor, Socialization and Society (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1968), pp. 182-226

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[9]Peter M. Blau and W. Richard Scott, Formal Organizations (San Francisco, California: Chandler Publishing Company, 1962), pp. 161-193

[10]Amatai Etzioni, "Organizational Control Structure," in James G. March, Handbook of Organizations (Chicago: McGraw Hill, 1965), pp. 651-652.

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[12]Leonard Nadler, Developing Human Resources (Houston: Gulf Publishing Company, 1970), p.7.

[13]For a still useful review see William H. Starbuck, "Organizational Growth and Development," in James C. March, editor, Handbook of Organizations (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965), pp. 451-533.

[14]Blau and Scott, op. cit., pp. 42-43.